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ABSTRACT

Twenty-seven questions concerning the National Assessment of Educational Progress and their answers are provided in this pamphlet. (For related documents, see TM 001 789 and TM 001 797.) (DB)

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS
A PROJECT OF THE EDUCATION COMMISSION OF THE STATES

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ED 067398

Questions and Answers

about the

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS

1. What is the National Assessment of Educational Progress?

It is an annual national survey of the knowledge, skills, understandings and attitudes of certain groups of young Americans.

2. What are the goals of National Assessment?

The two major goals are:

1. To make available the first comprehensive data on the educational attainments of young Americans.
2. To measure any growth or decline which takes place in selected aspects of the educational attainments of young Americans in certain subject areas.

3. Why is such an assessment necessary?

Every year billions of dollars are spent on education in the United States – on buildings, on teachers' salaries, on curriculum planning – but very little is known about the effectiveness of this expenditure. The purpose of National Assessment is to gather data that will help answer the question, "How much good is the expenditure of so much money doing, in terms of what Americans know and can do?"

TM 001 698

4. **Does this mean you're gathering data on specific school districts that will allow you to compare the effectiveness of different schools and districts?**

No, the sample is not drawn in such a way that we can make any statements about individual schools, districts, or even states. The smallest area we can talk about is a geographic region. For National Assessment purposes, the country is divided into four regions — Northeast, Southeast, Central, and West.

5. **How is National Assessment financed?**

The project has received funds from three different sources since it began in 1964 — the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford Foundation's Fund for the Advancement of Education, and the U.S. Office of Education. Currently major funding is provided by the National Center for Educational Statistics in the U.S. Office of Education.

6. **How does the Assessment gather data to determine the educational attainments of Americans?**

First, it is necessary to determine what the educational system is trying to achieve. These objectives are identified through the efforts of both school and lay people, and are to meet three basic criteria. These are that they must be:

1. considered important by scholars,
2. accepted as educational tasks by the schools, and
3. considered desirable by thoughtful lay citizens.

Second, questions and tasks, called exercises in National Assessment's terminology, are written to determine how well these objectives are being achieved.

Third, the exercises are administered to people selected through random sampling procedures throughout the country.

7. **Who is in charge of the Assessment?**

The Education Commission of the States (ECS) is National Assessment's governing organization. ECS is presently composed of representatives of 44 states and territories whose purpose is to discuss mutual educational problems and to act together to achieve educational goals. Since its membership includes governors, chief state school officers, legislators, and lay people, ECS serves to make National Assessment legally responsible to the public.

8. **Who makes the policy decisions about the project?**

The Steering Committee of ECS is the ultimate policy making group. It meets four times a year. In addition, a National Assessment Policy Committee meets four times a year to handle the month-to-month policy questions. Members include people working directly in the field of education and nonprofessionals concerned about education.

9. Who heads the National Assessment Policy Committee?

James A. Hazlett, Director of Elementary and Secondary Education for ECS and former superintendent of schools in Kansas City, Missouri, is chairman of the National Assessment Policy Committee. He is also the Administrative Director of NAEP.

10. Is ECS directly in charge of conducting the work of the Assessment?

No. ECS provides general direction for the project, but a separate NAEP staff within ECS handles the day-to-day work of the Assessment.

11. Who is the NAEP Staff Director?

J. Stanley Ahmann, formerly professor of psychology at Colorado State University, succeeded Frank B. Womer as Staff Director on July 1, 1971.

12. Where is the National Assessment staff located?

The National Assessment staff is located with the rest of the Education Commission of the States in Denver, Colorado. The address is:

300 Lincoln Tower
1860 Lincoln Street
Denver, Colorado 80203

13. When did the Assessment begin?

Project planning began in 1964, when the Exploratory Committee on Assessing the Progress of Education (ECAPE) was established with Carnegie Corporation funds to investigate the possibilities of a national assessment, and to develop a plan and instrumentation for its conduct. The work of ECAPE resulted in the design currently followed by NAEP. Actual administration of National Assessment exercises in the schools began in the spring of 1969.

14. Does the National Assessment staff administer the exercises?

No, field work is done by the Research Triangle Institute (RTI) of Raleigh, North Carolina, which works under contract with the Education Commission of the States. RTI conducts the assessment in the Northeast and Southeast regions, and subcontracts the assessment in the Central and West regions to the Measurement Research Center of Iowa City, Iowa.

15. Who are the people asked to respond to the exercises?

Four age levels are being sampled – 9-year-olds, 13-year-olds, 17-year-olds, and young adults between the ages of 26 and 35.

16. How are the people chosen to participate in the Assessment?

Using random sampling procedures similar to those used in public opinion polling, NAEP selects people for the Assessment and then seeks their cooperation.

17. How many people participate?

Approximately 80,000 to 100,000 people participate as respondents each year. National Assessment exercises are administered in such a way that no one individual takes all the exercises (this would require one person to spend as long as 14 hours to complete the entire set of exercises), but only a portion of the exercises. Approximately 2,500 respondents complete each exercise.

18. How are these people assessed?

Students in school are assessed in a group situation or, in some cases, in individual interviews. Paper-and-pencil questions, discussions, and actual tasks to perform are included among the exercises.

Adults are interviewed individually in their homes, and out-of-school 17-year-olds also respond to exercises individually.

19. Does administration of exercises in the school mean that students, teachers, and administrators must take much time from their classes?

Only about 50 minutes are required for a student to respond to the exercises, so he misses no more than a single class period. All exercises are administered by people employed by the Research Triangle Institute or the Measurement Research Center, so no teacher or administrator time is required for that purpose. School personnel are asked to provide a list of their students in the age group being assessed, to be used in randomly selecting individuals to participate, and they are asked to provide space for the assessment and to help locate students in the sample. Otherwise, no school time is necessary.

20. You say that schools provide a list of the students in the age group being assessed. Does this mean that individuals who participate in the assessment are identified by name?

No, the list of names is necessary only for the purpose of selecting, through random sampling procedures, the people who will participate. But the names of participants do not appear on any exercises, and NAEP ensures the anonymity of the respondents.

21. What are the subject areas included in the Assessment?

Ten subject areas were chosen for assessment: Citizenship, Science, Writing, Music, Mathematics, Literature, Social Studies, Reading, Art, and Career and Occupational Development. Other areas may be added in the future.

22. **Are all these areas being assessed each year?**

No. Other than the first year, two subject areas are assessed each year. The assessment plan is:

Cycle 1

March 1969 – February 1970	Science, Writing, Citizenship
October 1970 – August 1971	Reading, Literature
October 1971 – August 1972	Music, Social Studies
October 1972 – August 1973	Math, Science
October 1973 – August 1974	Writing, Career and Occupational Development
October 1974 – August 1975	Citizenship, Art

Cycle 2

October 1975 – August 1976	Reading, Literature
October 1976 – August 1977	Music, Social Studies
October 1977 – August 1978	Math, Science
October 1978 – August 1979	Career and Occupational Development, Writing
October 1979 – August 1980	Citizenship, Art

The repeated assessments of subject areas will allow comparisons to show whether change has occurred.

23. **How are results reported?**

About 50 percent of the exercises given each year are reported, along with the percentage of people giving various responses, both correct and incorrect. The remaining exercises will not be reported until they have been used again when a subject is reassessed in future years.

Results will be reported nationally – for example, the percentage of all 9-year-olds who responded correctly – for each exercise and each age. In addition, results will be given for other categories:

1. Geographic region – Northeast, Southeast, Central and West;
2. Size and Type of Community – extreme rural areas, extreme inner cities, extreme affluent suburbs, inner city fringes, suburban fringes, medium cities, small cities;
3. Sex;
4. Color – Black, White, and total;
5. Parental education – Both parents with eighth grade or less, one parent with some high school but not graduated, at least one parent graduated from high school, and at least one parent with some post-high school training.

Beginning with the second assessment year, results are reported for each subject area by **theme.** A theme is a set of exercises which share a common content but which may require diverse behavioral responses. A separate volume is devoted to the results of each theme.

24. **When will results be reported?**

National Assessment has already reported on the first assessments of Science, Citizenship, Writing, and Reading. Additional reports will be made each year as assessments are completed.

25. **What reports are available and where may they be obtained?**

The following reports are available:

Science National Results	$1.75
Science Group Results (by Sex, Region, Size of Community)	$1.00
Citizenship National Results	$1.25
Citizenship Group Results	$1.25
Writing National Results	$1.50
Writing Group Results	$1.25

The following reports will be available and priced by summer 1972:

Science Group Results (by Type of Community, Color, and Parental Education)
Writing Mechanics
Reading
Citizenship Group Results (by Type of Community, Color, and Parental Education)

Requests for reports should be directed to:

Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402

(School districts and individual schools cooperating in National Assessment receive free copies of the reports in which they participate.)

26. **How might results be used?**

Since National Assessment reports in each subject area will be forthcoming on a regular schedule, and since the basic curriculum objectives will be regularly reviewed based on input from all segments of the educational community, the reports should hold many ideas for local and state assessment projects, curriculum design, instructional materials development, teacher education and perhaps even industrial in-service training programs.

27. **Are there services available from NAEP of which we should be aware?**

Yes. In addition to a regular NAEP Newsletter reporting latest developments in the project, a new Department of Utilization/Applications has been created to collect and disseminate information about how results are viewed and used. This department conducts workshops and provides assistance to state and local education agencies in development of assessment projects appropriate to their own situations.

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